

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Planning Committee

4 March 2015

**AUTHOR/S:** Planning and New Communities Director

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**Application Number:** S/3038/14/FL

**Parish(es):** Great Abington

**Proposal:** Detached three-bedroom dwelling

**Site address:** 23 South Road, Great Abington, Cambs

**Applicant(s):** Mr & Mrs Johnson

**Recommendation:** Refusal

**Key material considerations:** Principle of development, sustainability, character of area

**Committee Site Visit:** Yes

**Departure Application:** No

**Presenting Officer:** Lorraine Casey

**Application brought to Committee because:** Referral to Committee has been requested by District Councillor David Bard

**Date by which decision due:** 4 March 2015

### **Planning History**

1. S/1013/85/F – Extension – approved.
2. S/0683/86/F – Extensions – approved.

### **Planning Policies**

3. *National Planning Policy Framework 2012*
4. *Local Development Framework 2007*

DP/1: Sustainable Development

DP/2: Design of New Development

DP/3: Development Criteria

DP/4: Infrastructure and New Developments

DP/7: Development Frameworks

SF/10: Outdoor Playspace, Informal Open Space and New Developments

SF/11: Open Space Standards  
TR/1: Planning for More Sustainable Travel  
TR/2: Car and Cycle Parking Standards  
Open Space in New Developments SPD  
District Design Guide SPD

5. *Draft Local Plan 2013*

S/1: Vision  
S/2: Objectives of the Local Plan  
S/3: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development  
S/5: Provision of New Jobs and Homes  
S/7: Development Frameworks  
HQ/1: Design Principles  
H/15: Development of Residential Gardens  
SC/6: Indoor Community Facilities  
SC/7: Outdoor Play Space, Informal Open Space and New Developments  
SC/8: Open Space Standards  
TI/2: Planning for Sustainable Travel  
TI/3: Parking Provision

**Consultations**

6. *Great Abington Parish Council* – Recommends approval “as this application is in-line with proposed policy set out within the LDF (on p 146) under review by the Inspector.”
7. *The Local Highways Authority* – Raises no objections.
8. *The Environmental Health Officer* – Raises no objections providing the following conditions/informatives being added to any consent:
  - Restriction of hours of use of power-operated machinery during the construction period.
  - Details of any driven pile foundations.
  - No bonfires or burning of waste during construction.

**Representations**

9. District Councillor Bard has confirmed his support for the application, stating the following:

“I have been asked to represent the applicants Mr. & Mrs. Johnson on behalf of the local member, Cllr. Orgee as he is personally acquainted with the Johnsons.

I gather that you are proposing to refuse this application under delegated powers on the ground that approval would result in a dwelling in an unsustainable location. I visited the site on 23<sup>rd</sup> January and it was fairly obvious that in addition to the dwellings associated with the former land settlement, most of which have been considerably extended, a number of new dwellings have been created by conversion of former farm buildings. This impression is confirmed by a brief search. Six applications, mostly involving farm building conversions have been approved since 2010.

S/2086/14/FL involved the construction of a completely new building and though it is described as a ‘live work unit’ is surely subject to similar sustainability considerations

as the present application. A further application (S/2320/14/FL) is currently the subject of an appeal, yet to be determined. It is difficult to reconcile the claim that this site is unsustainable with this steady trickle of approvals over the last five years.

The site is less than 2 km from a major employment site (Granta Park) and about 3.5 km from another (Babraham Institute), both of which are accessible by safe cycle routes. The distance to the Southern end of Gt Abington High Street is 1.6 km . These distances are considerably less than those claimed by County officers to be reasonable and realistic for cycle commuting in justification of their ambitious cycleway programme. The applicant has, I gather, offered to contribute towards safe cycle storage at the nearest bus stop.

The assessment of 'sustainability' is largely a matter of judgement, as is consistency with previous permissions granted on neighbouring sites. For that reason I request that this application be referred for determination to Planning Committee and that prior to this, there should be a member site visit."

10. 6 letters of support have been received from residents of Nos. 20, 34, 35, 36, 37 South Road and No.8 Chalky Road. These responses confirm that the old piggery for No.23 was sited to the east of the existing house near to the other outbuildings, and support the application to build a house in this location.
11. 2 objections have been received (no addresses supplied for either). The main concerns raised are as follows:
  - The erection of a house on this site would open the floodgates for every other house on the land settlement to build on their land. The infrastructure could not support this. The village school is over-subscribed and the road is not suited for such an increase in development in the area.
  - Upgrading the existing property to insert a lift would appear to be more cost-effective than building a new dwelling.
  - There is currently no building on the site. Although there are letters confirming there was previously a piggery on the site, they were very sturdy structures and unlikely to have been in danger of collapse.

## **Planning Comments**

### ***Site and Proposal***

12. No.23 South Road is a detached dwelling that was originally constructed in the 1930's and extended in the 1980's. It lies outside the defined village framework within the Great Abington Land Settlement Association area. The site forms part of the residential curtilage on the east side of the dwelling and comprises a single-storey timber outbuilding that currently provides garaging and storage for the dwelling.
13. The application proposes to erect a detached three-bedroom dwelling within the existing garden land on the east side of the existing property. The proposed dwelling would be set back from the road in a similar position to No.23. It would be 6.9 metres high to the ridge and 3.6 metres high to the eaves, and would comprise three floors of accommodation (including a basement), with materials consisting of stained weatherboarding walls under a clay plain tile roof. The existing outbuilding would be retained and used in association with the proposed dwelling for the storage of bins, bikes and garden equipment etc. The existing vehicular access would be shared between the existing and proposed dwellings, and parking spaces provided within the

curtilage of each property. A new post-and-rail fence and hedgerow would be planted to subdivide the gardens of the two properties.

14. A supporting statement explains that the Abington Land Settlement was set up in 1937, and comprised around sixty holdings, each with about 10 acres, a small house and a piggery in its curtilage. In the 1980's, the houses and land were sold off and the roads became private roads jointly owned by the landowners. Many of the houses have subsequently been extended and some additional outbuildings, such as stables and horticultural buildings, added.
15. No.23 has been extended over time to become a five-bedroomed family home. The proposal is to build a house on the site of the former piggery, which was demolished some years ago as it was collapsing and unsafe. The applicants state that the proposed dwelling sits on the same building line as the houses in the area and reflects the character of the original houses and surrounding agricultural buildings. The proposed dwelling is designed to enable the applicants to live an independent life and incorporates wide doorways and the facility to put in a lift. It would also be insulated to a high standard and incorporate solar panels for electricity generation, rainwater recycling and a ground source heat pump.

#### ***Principle of development***

16. The site lies outside the defined village framework of Great Abington. The erection of a dwelling in this location would be contrary to adopted LDF Policy DP/7 and the emerging Local Plan Policy S/7 which state that, outside frameworks, only development for agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation and other uses that need to be located in the countryside will be permitted.
17. The information accompanying the application explains that, following the Waterbeach appeal decisions in June 2014, the Council does not have a demonstrable five-year housing land supply, that the Local Plan is out-of-date and that the application should therefore be determined in accordance with the NPPF.
18. The Council acknowledges that it cannot currently demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing. The NPPF states that, in such instances, policies for the supply of housing cannot be considered up-to-date. Paragraph 14 makes it clear that, where the development plan is out-of-date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole or specific policies indicate development should be restricted.

#### ***Sustainable development***

19. Whilst there is a demonstrable housing need in the District, Local Plan policies and the NPPF make it clear that new housing must be provided in a sustainable manner and considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The supporting text to Policies DP/7 and S/7 explain that it is necessary to define village frameworks in order to ensure that the countryside is protected from gradual encroachment and to help guard against incremental growth in unsustainable locations. Whilst weight cannot presently be given to the framework boundaries, it remains the case that the proposed dwelling lies in an isolated location and would compromise the principles of promoting sustainable development and protecting the countryside from encroachment.

20. The applicants have submitted supporting information which states that, in their opinion, the site is in a sustainable location. It lies within a community of around 60 houses approximately 2.5km away from the village centre and 1.6km from the Pampisford Road bus stop (from which there is a half-hourly service to Haverhill and Cambridge, including access to the doctor's surgery in Linton). Granta Park is 2.2km away and accessible by cycle, and it is argued that the network of roads forming the Land Settlement area provide a safe environment for cyclists. Furthermore, there is a post box with daily collections, newspapers are delivered to a pick-up point on South Road, there is a milkman, eggs, library stop for 30 minutes on North Road (650m from the house) and refuse collections that are carried out on the same schedule as the rest of the village.
21. Officers consider that the arguments put forward by the applicants in support of the application very much demonstrate how unsustainable the site is. Great Abington, the centre of which is 2.5km from the site, is designated as a Group Village. Villages in this category have a limited level of services and facilities allowing only some of the basic day-to-day requirements of their residents to be met without needing to travel outside the village. Great Abington has a primary school, local shop, pub and hairdressers but residents are required to travel further afield for facilities such as doctors and dentists (Linton) or village colleges/further education (Linton, Sawston or Cambridge). Additionally, the roads in the Land Settlement Association are shared between pedestrians and vehicles, and have no street lighting. The combination of the lack of well-lit footpaths and cycleways together with the distance of the site from the village centre and nearest bus stop means that, in all likelihood, residents would be likely to rely on the private car to access local services and facilities. It is therefore considered that the proposal would conflict with one of the undermining principles of sustainable development, namely minimising the need to travel and reducing car dependency.

***Impact on character of the area***

22. Notwithstanding the above concerns, it is also considered that the proposed development would harm the rural character and appearance of the area. No.23 South Road consists of one of around 60 houses in the Land Settlement area, dwellings that were set up in the late 1930's as smallholdings. Whilst a number of the dwellings have been significantly extended over time, and some outbuildings converted to form annexes/habitable accommodation, the character of the Land Settlement is overwhelmingly one of detached houses set within significant plot sizes, with a relatively even spacing between dwellings. Whilst an Inspector has previously commented that the area is 'characterised by a density and regularity of housing that is not typical of the countryside', Officers would argue that the low density and degree of spacing between houses is not consistent with an urban, built-up area and that the Estate could therefore be argued to be semi-rural in character.
23. Whilst the proposed dwelling has been designed on the same building line as nearby properties and is similar in scale and design, the proposal would result in a smaller plot size and more cramped form of development (in terms of average spacing between dwellings) than is typical of the area. Additionally, if the application is approved, it would make it impossible for the Council to resist similar applications elsewhere within the Land Settlement area. This would have a seriously detrimental impact on the character of the area and result in the creation of a suburban form of development in this semi-rural location.
24. The applicants and Cllr Bard have referred to other instances in the Land Settlement area where planning permission has been granted for dwellings. It is notable that

there is not a single example or instance of a newly constructed dwelling being erected in this area. Examples of recent development in the LSA include the conversion of outbuildings to a new dwelling at 44 North Road and to a live/work unit at 32 South Road, and the conversion of a former pumping station to a dwelling in North Road. All of these consents are consistent with policies relating to the conversion of rural outbuildings to alternative uses. Consent has also recently been granted to convert an outbuilding at 57a North Road to a dwelling, but, for sustainability reasons, the occupation of this approved dwelling was specifically restricted to an equestrian worker employed in connection with the business being operated on the adjacent.

25. None of the examples quoted within the application and referred to above are considered to have established any form of precedent that would make the erection of a new dwelling in this location acceptable.
26. The harm caused by providing the proposed new dwelling in an unsustainable location and to the character of the area would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits from the contribution of a single dwelling towards meeting the Council's five-year housing need. The proposal would therefore be contrary to paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

#### ***Other matters***

27. In 2012, Great Abington Parish Council submitted a representation to the Local Plan. This suggested that there should be a special policy covering the LSA that, amongst other things, would include provision for each of the original houses being allowed to convert one existing outbuilding to a dwelling subject to maintaining adequate distances between neighbouring properties and to a maximum floor area of 150 square metres.
28. This representation was considered as part of the Local Plan review, but was not taken forward. The draft Local Plan does propose to introduce a greater degree of flexibility into policies relating to extending dwellings in the countryside and to the conversion of existing rural buildings, but it is notable that this application does not fall within either of these categories of development. Additionally, whilst the Parish Council may consider the proposal to be consistent with its representation and intentions for the Estate, the lack of any specific policy covering the area would mean the Council would have no means by which future development could be controlled in the event this application were approved.

#### **Recommendation**

29. Refusal:
  1. The site is located outside the defined village framework for Great Abington and within the countryside, approximately 2.5 kilometres from the services and facilities within the centre of Great Abington and 1.6 kilometres from the nearest bus stop in Pampisford Road. Additionally, the roads in the Land Settlement Association area are shared between pedestrians and vehicles, and have no street lighting. The combination of the lack of well-lit footpaths and cycleways together with the distance of the site from the village centre and nearest bus stop means that, in all likelihood, occupiers of the proposed dwelling would be likely to rely on the private car to access services and facilities. The proposal would conflict with one of the underlying principles of sustainable development, namely minimising the need to travel and reducing car dependency. Consequently, the

proposal would be contrary to: the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012, which contains a presumption in favour of sustainable development; and the principles of Policy DP/7 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007, which seeks to prevent incremental housing growth in unsustainable locations..

2. Notwithstanding the above, the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area. No.23 South Road consists of one of around 60 houses in the Land Settlement area of North road, South Road and Chalky Road. Whilst a number of the dwellings have been significantly extended over time, and some outbuildings converted to form annexes/habitable accommodation, the character of the area is overwhelmingly one of detached houses set within significant plot sizes, with a relatively even spacing between dwellings that lends the area a semi-rural character. The proposed development would result in a smaller plot size and more cramped form of development (in terms of average spacing between dwellings) than is typical of the area. Additionally, if approved, it would make it very difficult for the Council to resist similar applications elsewhere within the Land Settlement area. This would result in the creation of a suburban form of development that would have a seriously detrimental impact on the character of the area. Consequently, the proposal would be contrary to Policies DP/2 and DP/3 of the Local Development Framework 2007, which state that permission will not be granted for development that has an unacceptable adverse impact on the countryside, and require new development to preserve or enhance the character of the local area.

### **Background Papers**

Where [the Local Authorities \(Executive Arrangements\) \(Meetings and Access to Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) require documents to be open to inspection by members of the public, they must be available for inspection: -

- (a) at all reasonable hours at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council;
- (b) on the Council's website; and
- (c) in the case of documents to be available for inspection pursuant to regulation 15, on payment of a reasonable fee required by the Council by the person seeking to inspect the documents at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

The following list contains links to the documents on the Council's website and / or an indication as to where hard copies can be inspected.

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy DPD 2007
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Supplementary Planning Documents
- Draft Local Plan 2013
- National Planning Policy Framework 2012
- Planning File Ref: S/3038/14/FL

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